

# MARK PRICES IN PLAIN FIGURES

Code System Disappearing Because of Abuses It Encouraged.

## ABANDONED BY THE LEADERS

Change to Some Extent Forced by Buyers, Many Insisting on Plain Figures—Origin of Code System Not Clearly Known.

New York.—Among the less noticeable and important changes that have taken place in the business world in the last few years has been the gradual disappearance of codes in connection with price tickets and the marking of the values of the merchandise in plain figures. While many concerns still stick to pricing their lines in code, the trade leaders have very largely abandoned the practice. Smaller concerns have followed suit to some extent, but others have been loath to put plain figures on their goods.

The change from code to figures in marking prices, according to information gained in this market, has been forced to some extent by the buyers. There are many retailers and special buyers for the big stores who will not purchase a concern which hides its prices behind a code. The reason one such buyer gave recently for this is that the code does not mean the same to all buyers when translated into figures. In other words, he asserted that the use of a code is merely a subterfuge by means of which different buyers can be charged different prices for the same merchandise without their knowing it.

### Origin Not Clear.

Just where and by whom the code system of marking prices was originated appears to be not clearly known. The reason why it was adopted is also something of a puzzle, although plausible solutions are offered. About the only thing regarding it that is at all definite is that it came into being years ago, when it was the custom of the manufacturers and wholesalers to build a kind of Chinese wall around their business and station a regiment of soldiers at every gate. In those days, according to trade veterans, commercial spying was a high art, and more than one man had his palm crossed with silver for posing as a buyer and thus obtaining price data of the competitors of the merchant who hired him. In those days anything approaching the open-price associations that had their being here during the war would have been looked upon as madness, for then, to all intents and purposes, every merchant regarded his competitors as personal enemies.

One of the favorite codes used in the early days, it is said, was the one based on the old motto, "In God We Trust." This had the advantage of containing but twelve letters, with no duplications in the first ten. Thus, by dropping the final "st," something like this was arrived at:

INGODWETR  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

With this arrangement worked out, the rest was easy. If a man were selling broadcloth at \$4.50 a yard, on his price ticket would appear the more or less cryptic sign O D U. Were he selling an overcoat at \$37.25, the mark on the ticket would be G E N D. Sometimes the code would be varied by placing the figure 1 under the U and numbering in sequence to the left instead of to the right. Thousands of codes and variations of original ones have since been devised.

### Frequently Abused.

While there seems to be little doubt that the code system was adopted originally as a protective measure, it was not long before it began to be used for more ulterior purposes. What was there, somebody evidently argued, to prevent the use of the code to fool buyers as to the real price? In its early days, at least, wholesale business was no more conducted on a strictly one-price basis than was retail selling. Therefore, not only did a code price frequently mean different quotations to different buyers, but it often meant the minimum figure at which a yard of goods or a garment could be sold. The salesmen were permitted to get anything they could above the figure indicated by the code, and as they were paid in comparison with what they sold, they tried to get all the traffic would bear. That way of doing business prevailed in one of the biggest wholesale houses in the country for years, it is said, and the gentle art of buying there was rendered more difficult by the fact that practically every kind of merchandise sold by the concern had a different code.

Instances like those noted above have been paralleled many times, according to the buyers heretofore mentioned. In late years, however, salesmen have had less leeway, if any at all, in connection with fixing prices. Because of this the double-price system of different buyers is "worked" more in the salesrooms than on the road. Also, it is asserted, the practice referred to is now very largely confined to the garment trades. In the hands of a smooth worker, usually a member of the firm or the so-called general representative, the cryptic code letters can mean \$37.50 to one buyer and \$37.25 to another. To a really favored buyer it might mean even less.

## JIM BARNES HAS STRIVEN HARD FOR HONORS FINALLY ATTAINED



### Hail "Long Jim" Barnes!

Ten years ago, when a westerner brought word East that they had a future-great out on the Pacific coast, little attention was paid to the matter. It was regarded as a westerner's natural enthusiasm for things western. But a few days ago, at the Columbia Country club, the westerner's prediction came true—the future-great arrived.

### Gained Prominence at Sunset Hills.

It was Jim Barnes who was referred to by the western golf enthusiast: Barnes, then a mere youth, just over from Cornwall, who was serving in the capacity of professional at one of the western clubs. Later he came to Sunset hills, and it was while there that he attained national prominence as one of the stars of the golf world. Since 1912, when he played in his first open championship at Buffalo, Barnes has striven for the honor that finally came to him, says a writer in the New York Times. For several years he failed, finishing far behind the leaders, but during the last few years he had come to be more and more feared by the other professionals.

### Always Fell Short.

One of the greatest of the great, Barnes while being able to win other

honors, always fell short in the national opening. But this year, beginning at the tournaments in the South, he seemed to have struck his stride. Then came misfortune—misfortune that perhaps cost him the British open title, for he was in a tie for the lead in that event when the third round ended. Exhaustion from the weakening effects of his illness told on him in the final round, and he dropped back.

### Smashed Course Record.

Upon his return to American shores, however, Barnes looked like a new man, and when the tournament started at Washington he gave an indication of what might be expected by breaking the competitive record for the course in the opening round. The lead that he gained over the remainder of the field stood him in good stead, for, playing in the manner that he was, there was no chance of his being overtaken. His honors, long delayed, were gloriously won and handsomely deserved. "Long Jim" is the type of golfer that may be depended upon to carry his honors with modesty. His victory was well earned, for he played the most consistent and brilliant golf of any of the big field that was entered in the tournament.

## Like the Cave Dwellers of the Past

NEWARK, N. J.—Two prosecuting officers of New Jersey, those of Somerset and Union counties, are wondering whether they have any cause to interfere with the mode of life adopted by members of the "Naturalist Colony." There are about 60 in the colony, men women and children, hailing from New York and Newark. They live as the primitive ancestors of the human race did and have chosen for their "back to nature" scene the rock-encrusted summit of "Freedom Hill," in a remote section of the Orange mountains.

The aversion to the dictated attire of civilization is the aggravation of the county prosecutors and pleasure drivers through the mountain roads. It is charged the colonists walk to the swimming pools and to the fishing grounds in total disregard of the conventions—free—like the cave dwellers of the past.

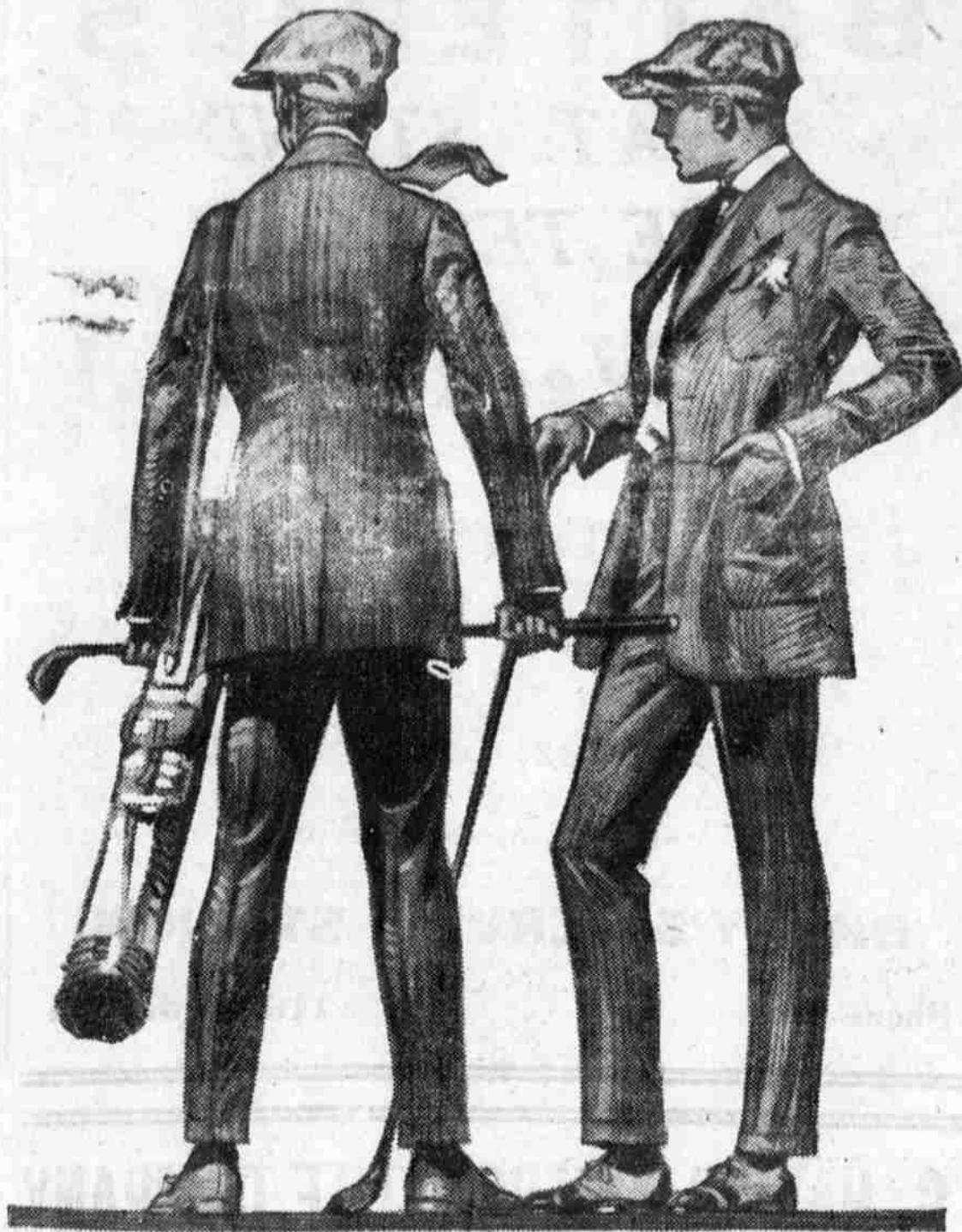
In everyday life the "Master" of the colony is Moses I. Littauer. A man of medium build, slender, blue-eyed and erect, he has flowing blond hair which falls in graceful ringlets about his shoulders, and a luxuriant beard that apparently is untouched by scissors or



comb. His garb is a sort of combination suit of cotton with buttons down the front, though their utility is ignored. He is tan-coated from head to foot, and is proud of it, saying: "Is not a coat of tan more beautiful than any tailor-made suit which society rules require?"

He went on: "It is not true that any of my people travel the roads naked, as it is charged. We keep to our own acres when we go about as nature intended. Clothing is bad for the health. A healthy skin cannot live all bound up."

"Those people in the tenements, the skyscrapers and the mansions live among the dead things. We absorb the vitality, the electricity, the vigor of nature."



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